

National Plant Materials Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Golden Meadows, LA Plant Materials Center  
January 22-23, 2003

The meeting was chaired by Leonard Jordan

**In Attendance:**

Members:

Leonard Jordan, State Conservationist, Co-Chairman, Georgia

Rich Sims, State Conservationist, Idaho

Don Gohmert, State Conservationist, Louisiana

Others:

John McLain, Resource Concepts, Inc., Reno, NV

John Hovanessian, CNPS, Inc., Milton, FL

Richard White, National Program Leader, Plant Materials, Washington D.C.

John Englert, PMC Manager/Acting PM Information Coordinator, Beltsville, MD

Steve Carmichael, State Resource Conservationist, Louisiana

Scott Edwards, Plant Materials Specialist, Louisiana

**Review of Action Items from previous meetings**

Name	Action Item Description	Status
Niles Glasgow & Leonard Jordan	Prepare and send letter to Larry Clark for setting up appointment with Mark Rey on Government Plant Materials Program (involving Larry/Rick).	Item is still open; this should be discussed after the Chief's Briefing on 9/26/02 – Larry wanted to take the lead on this action. <b>Item moved forward.</b>
Niles Glasgow & Leonard Jordan	Brief the Chief's Executive team on Regional Coordinator positions.	Niles and Leonard talked with Charles Adams to get his support for going to the Chief on this issue. Charles has briefed the Chief on this. No results have been realized yet.
NPMAC Committee	Review the PM Marketing Plan and send comments to Rick by Nov. 1.	No comments received; date extended to 11/1/02. <b>DONE</b>
John Scheetz	Provide additional details to accompany data in the comparison of Plant Materials Centers in Total Performance, cost of products, etc. tables.	Not completed – final format of table needs to be decided on
Rick and John Working with Niles and Leonard	Produce tables that can be sent to State Conservationists with plant material centers.	Can't be completed until above item is completed
Tom Jewett	Prepare the fact sheet that identifies the role of plant materials relative to 2002 Farm Bill.	This is in progress; NPMC will contact Jewett through Dwight Tober to consolidate this effort.

Name	Action Item Description	Status
		<b>11/13/02</b> – No progress from ND, Jody Holzworth will be working on something to be completed in Feb 2003.
Don Gohmert	Send a memo to the PM Training Conference committee on topics of training/meeting that need to be thought about in the first meeting	<b>DONE</b> – Training Conference committee is moving forward.
Niles and Leonard	Review with Chief the need for 2 Regional PM Coordinator positions and make a decision to support and proceed with advertising or to drop.	Ongoing; Item <b>DONE</b> but no decision made
Niles Glasgow & Leonard Jordan	Review sending out a “Letter of Support from the Chief” with the new Chief and let him make the decision on whether or not to proceed.	<b>DONE</b> - Sept 26; Chief said to proceed with preparing a letter to send out under his signature.
NPMAC	Refine core set of Budget Initiatives at January 2003 meeting. Initiatives to be used.	<b>DONE</b> – revised initiatives brought to Jan 03 meeting
Rick White	Make STCs aware of PMC performance goals and progress being made towards goals at end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q.	To be done by 4/30/03
Rick White	Need to get information pulled together now for FY05 OMB performance assessment of PMCs	Outline of what this might look like is being prepared
Rick White	Prepare a directive informing all PMCs and PMSs to use POMS for operations.	<b>DONE</b> - 11/13/02 – Directive prepared; 12/23/02 – Directive issued.
Rick White	Prepare core set of draft Budget Initiatives prior to January 2003 meeting.	<b>DONE</b> – revised initiatives brought to Jan 03 meeting
Rick White	Send out message to PM Staff by October 31 to complete Education, Expertise and Certifications section in POMS this by Jan 1.	<b>DONE</b> – White sent e-mail to PMC Managers and PMSs on 10/25/02. Englert sent follow-up reminder to all PM staff on 11/12/02.
Rick White	The request for annual performance goals should be sent to STCs with a cc: to PMCs in the future.	Future item
Rick White & John Englert	Prepare final materials on PMCs providing training to field offices and distribute to all PMCs and PMSs	<b>DONE</b> – e-mail sent out to PM staff with copy to STCs with PMCs on 1/14/03
Rick White, Niles Glasgow, & Leonard Jordan	Need to act quickly to try to get off-the-top reduced for FY03 in order to improve FY03 budget.	No longer relevant for FY03

## **Discussion on meeting agenda items:**

### **Previous Action Item Discussion**

- 1) Letter to Mark Rey on government plant materials program
  - a) Draft letter went to Larry Clark. There needs to be follow-up on this with Larry.
    - i) **Action Item:** Niles and Leonard will follow up with Larry Clark to see where this effort stands
  - b) John McLain – would like to prepare and submit a letter directly to Mark Rey on this issue.
    - i) **Action Item:** John McLain send a letter to Mark Rey as follow-up to previous meetings, value of PMCs, status of PMCs, and value of looking at other agencies contributing to current PM program. John Hovanesian send a similar letter reinforcing the need for looking at multi-agency work with PMCs and the importance of PMC work.
  - c) Background information: Conservation operations (CO) is a discretionary program. Congress writes into the CO language that PM (CO-46) should receive not less than \$X million. PM typically receives the minimum recommended by Congress (Snow Survey, Soils, etc follow the same trend). The NRCS Chief has the ability to increase the minimum allocated for CO-46. Gohmert: If Chief was to increase CO-46 and other programs' funding, Districts could lobby Congress to increase funding for field office operations. Rick White: Chief also has the ability to adjust “off-the-top” and earmarks charged to CO-46. This would have an immediate impact on available funding.
  - d) Need a strategy worked out on how to discuss this with Mark Rey so that it is presented as a win-win situation.
- 2) Regional Coordinator positions
  - a) No action on this so far.
  - b) **Action Item:** Rick White – prepare an SF-52 to advertise for the 2 Regional Coordinator positions and see what happens. SF-52s should be submitted as soon as possible even with the hiring freeze in effect. This will hopefully elicit a response and force the issue to be addressed.
- 3) Involvement of RC on the committee
  - a) **Action Item:** Leonard Jordan - Follow up with Humberto Hernandez to get him to participate on the PM Advisory Committee. Also follow up with his support for the regional Conservationists positions.
- 4) Need to prepare lists of supporters and champions for the PM Program to develop a network to support PM
  - a) **Action Item:** Englert/White – prepare letter to send to STCs with copy to PMCs/PMSs asking for contacts and supporters for the PMC program. Work to get names into POMS and do special export by late Feb. Info comes forward to NPMC to prepare lists for John Hovanesian by Feb 28. [Note: A different strategy was later used to collect this information.]

### **Comments from partners (McLain and Hovanesian)**

- 1) Need a champion for each PMC service area so that the message is delivered across the nation.

- 2) Need to emphasize the development of lists of names and addresses of supporters and influential people.
- 3) Need impact statements for the national program as well as for each state. Need sound bytes that can be provided to STCs and other influential persons when providing information to Congressional staffers etc.
- 4) Might be worth bringing in additional key partners, such as Ecological Society of America, to gain additional support and input to the Program.

#### **National training meeting (Gohmert)**

- 1) The committee met last November
- 2) Emphasis of meeting would be on training and how best to educate folks on plant materials
- 3) Meeting would run Monday noon through Friday
- 4) Participants: PM staff, SRCs, some STCs (about 200 people)
- 5) Format
  - a) Need an inspirational speaker knowledgeable about PMCs; show video of PM in the background.
  - b) What if we did not have the PM program?
  - c) Chief gives address to the group
  - d) Themes: 4 main themes; concurrent sessions
- 6) Pete Heard has offered support of Lyn Betts (IA) and also looking towards Bob Stovall (FL) to prepare video.
- 7) Funds – will need help from Chief - \$50-70K
- 8) John Peterson (retired SCS employee who does meeting management) has been contacted about organizing the meeting (hotels, supplies, etc). Cost - \$12,000 + travel.
- 9) **Action Item:** Don Gohmert will try to get 15 minutes with the Chief at NACD meeting to get support for the meeting and funds.
- 10) Have sessions to discuss how each PMC and PMS will put into action what they learned at the meeting.

#### **Budget issues (White)**

- 1) Update provided
- 2) Initiatives
  - a) Background Info – Budget process works by preparing budgets one year in advance of current year. Budget Initiatives are prepared for special needs. They are requested in April/May for the fiscal year in 2 years (i.e., in April 2003, the request will be made for initiatives in FY 2005). Initiatives move forward to agency and ranked; those of highest priority move to department; some initiatives are forwarded to OMB. OMB decides which initiatives are worthwhile and will insert new items into the President's Budget. PM needs to start now to polish initiatives for FY 2005 request. Rick White submits initiatives; RCs/STCs will submit initiatives for their areas as well. It would be best if state requests were in sync with PM initiatives.
  - b) Comments
    - i) Submit all initiatives together with a cover sheet.
    - ii) Emphasize critical issues such as fire and drought. Might want to have an initiative for natural catastrophes which would address drought, fire, flood, hurricanes &

- coastal erosion (incl. Great Lakes; use a graphic to illustrate this; tie to economic dollars/environmental restoration/habitat reconstruction), etc. Strategic seed supplies.
- iii) Use words rehabilitation, reconstruction, rehabilitation. Don't use preservation, management.
- iv) Emphasize technology transfer of existing technology to enhance Farm Bill delivery.
- v) Needs to be an integrated approach – plants + soils + engineering. Critical void would exist without plant technology.
- vi) Need to address and emphasize how much money this initiative will save in constructed techniques and in other economic benefit. This will address OMB issues. Then bring it downward to the resource issues benefited, etc.
- vii) Include T&E species work with invasive plant initiative and others as needed. Also culturally important species. See where these can be worked in. Infrastructure needs to address this.
- viii) Weave Farm Bill programs into other initiatives as appropriate. May not cover Farm Bill as a separate initiative. Address broad resource issues while still affecting on-farm (Farm Bill) needs.
- ix) Military – rehabilitation of lands; protect nation's natural resources while the military works to protect the nation.
- x) Grassland Reserve Program – still uncertain – need 1M acres of native grasses
- 3) Strategies for bringing initiatives forward by NPMAC
  - a) NPMAC members should present initiatives to their peers. NPMAC members need to fully understand initiatives so they can discuss with other STCs.
  - b) **Action Items:** Don Gohmert & John McLain - Recommend to Chief that NRCS finalize an invasive species policy and emphasize the role of PM to address initiatives. Send letter to Chief with copy to Tom Weber, Larry Clark, NPMAC, Hovanesian, McLain.

### **Assessment of factors in potential closure decision(s)**

- 1) Review information on performance factors
  - a) Send out sheet with only the STCs PMC indicated compared to the average for all PMCs
  - b) Send under Rick White's signature, copy to RCs, Larry Clark, Diane Gelburd
  - c) Good time to reiterate the need to hold PMC Advisory Committee Meetings to assess what the PMC is doing in relation to performance.
- 2) Strategic importance of individual PMCs to NRCS

### **Marketing efforts**

- 1) Marketing plan
  - a) Plan has been thoroughly reviewed by NPMAC, NPMTC, Conservation Communications, Barbara Wallace, others. Communication Action Plan for priority audiences was distributed.
  - b) John McLain and John Hovanesian will be reviewing the Plans and provide comments back to the committee via Rick White.
- 2) Brochure – draft was distributed
  - a) Leave space on back for label for local contact that a PMC or PMS can put on the brochure.

- b) What reaction/effect do we want from the brochure? Gohmert – if this is sitting on a FO brochure rack people might think that this is another program like CRP, WHIP, etc. Maybe don't include the word "Program" on the cover – slogan might be enough.
- c) Hovanesian – need to mention interfaces with commercial producers as well as private and public lands. Collects, selects and produces – need to be careful about "produces" – make it clear that this is not for commercial gain for PMCs.
- d) Identify the Program as technical assistance and not cost-share
- e) John McLain – focus on PMCs and what they are doing today and how they can benefit users. Don't need as much background information on PMCs and Dust Bowl. Include pictures of kids working with plants.
- f) Identify work with Tribes or say we work with public, private, and tribal lands. Mention culturally significant and T&E species.
- g) Need to identify how assistance can be reached – Districts, PM Web site, PMS/PMC
- 3) E-newsletter
  - a) Very positive reaction from everyone
  - b) May want to de-emphasize Farm Bill and emphasize enhancing game bird habitat or such things. Using Farm Bill to solve conservation problems. "Superior plants restore upland habitats" – need to separate out from the pack. Don't emphasize acres. Indicate highway beautification, mine spoil reclamation.
  - c) Any possibilities of adapting the newsletter to each PMC or region? Have each state send on their own version.
  - d) How do we get STCs to pass this on to elected officials?
    - i) Terry Bish send note to all PASs to follow up on sending this out??
    - ii) Have each NPMAC committee member follow up with other STCs in their region to let them know what to do with it.
    - iii) Newsletter needs to be local. – look at regional variations
  - e) **Action Item:** John Englert/Jody Holzworth – tone down current issue and focus less on Farm Bill and more on conservation. Send out to entire listserver list. Prepare text for what we want NPMAC to convey to other STCs in their region, and they will contact other STCs in their region.
- 4) Farm Bill Fact Sheet – good to proceed with a sheet to explain how PM can help FOs do their jobs better when dealing with the Farm Bill. This would be primarily an internal NRCS document.

### **POMS – (Englert)**

- 1) Update of progress
- 2) Bulletin – Directive for all PM staff will use POMS, effective 12/23/02
- 3) Net meeting training – 5 sessions provided via NetMeeting over the Internet, about 10-15 participants per session. This was an excellent way to train staff about POMS.

### **Full funding aspects (White)**

- 1) This relates to the potential for a program review in FY 2005.
- 2) A draft worksheet has been prepared and was discussed.
- 3) Discussion
  - a) Include Homeland Security needs into full cost
  - b) Full cost does not include work for several initiatives

- c) Need to determine if full cost should include current level of work or full program needs.
- d) Reimbursables should be considered as needed for full cost since many PMCs need them to keep the doors open – maybe should not include reimbursables on worksheet.

## **Future Action Items**

### **Action Items brought forward from previous meetings**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Action Item Description</b>	<b>Status</b>
Tom Jewett	Prepare the fact sheet that identifies the role of plant materials relative to 2002 Farm Bill.	This is in progress; NPMC will contact Jewett through Dwight Tober to consolidate this effort. <b>11/13/02</b> – No progress from ND, Jody Holzworth will be working on something to be completed in April 2003.
Rick White and John Englert	Produce PMC 5-year performance tables and send to State Conservationists with plant material centers.	<b>DONE</b> - 4/16/03
Rick White	Make STCs aware of PMC performance goals and progress being made towards goals at end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q.	<b>DONE</b> - 4/16/03
Rick White	Need to get information pulled together now for FY05 OMB performance assessment of PMCs	OMB-PART process is underway and progress is being made
Rick White	The request for annual performance goals should be sent to STCs with a cc: to PMCs in the future.	Future item – September 2003
Niles Glasgow & Leonard Jordan	Follow-up with Larry Clark on sending a letter to Mark Rey regarding promoting a government PM program.	
John McLain and John Hovanesian	Send a letter to Mark Rey as follow-up to previous meetings, value of PMCs, status of PMCs, and value of looking at other agencies contributing to current PM program.	
Rick White	Prepare an SF-52 to advertise for the 2 Regional Coordinator positions and submit through channels.	<b>DONE</b> - Is being taken care of per Diane Gelburd 4/2/03
Leonard Jordan	Follow up with Humberto Hernandez to get him to participate on the PM Advisory Committee	
Rick White & John Englert	prepare letter to send to STCs with copy to PMCs/PMSs asking for contacts and supporters for the PMC program	Not done

Name	Action Item Description	Status
Rick White	Send memo out to all PM staff letting them know that if deadlines for information are not met the STC will be contacted directly.	Not done
Don Gohmert & John McLain	Recommend to Chief that NRCS finalize an invasive species policy and emphasize the role of PM to address initiatives.	<b>DONE</b> – sent to Chief 2/10/03
John Englert, Jody Holzworth, others	Revise Budget Initiatives with comments from NPMAC by mid February and have a through review by others.	Nothing done since last meeting but initiatives are being handled differently and PM has been addressed in new format
John Englert & Jody Holzworth	Prepare Farm Bill fact sheet for internal NRCS use to describe how PM can help FOs work on Farm Bill.	Draft completed for discussion
Don Gohmert	Set up a meeting with the Chief at the NACD meeting in February to discuss the national PM Training Conference	<b>DONE</b> – covered at NACD meeting 2/5/03